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General and complete disarmament: observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Report of the Secretary-General**

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* A/55/150.

** The report contains replies from Member States and its preparation depends upon receipt of such replies.

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I. Introduction

1. On 1 December 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/54 S, entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", operative paragraph 4 of which reads as follows:

> "4. *Invites* all Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General information on the measures they have adopted to promote the objectives envisaged in the present resolution, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report containing this information to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session."

2. Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General, on 14 March 2000, addressed a note verbale to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are reproduced in chapter II below. Any other replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

A. Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[19 June 2000]

3. Concern for the environment occupies an increasingly important rank among the priorities of numerous States, international organizations, non-governmental bodies and individuals. This concern has to do not only with the possibility of serious accidents or the management of radioactive waste, but also with the implementation and preparation of disarmament and arms control agreements.

4. Cuba provides for environmental conservation and protection in its economic and social development plan, including specific provisions that no military exercise, manoeuvre or other activity of that nature may affect the natural environment. This concern has also been reflected in all forums relating to the issue, especially in the preparation over several years of a draft resolution by which the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries expresses its concerns and undertakings in this area.

5. Through the aforesaid draft resolution, the non-aligned countries reaffirm their conviction that the international disarmament forums should take the relevant environmental protection norms into account in the preparation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements and treaties, and they call upon States to adopt unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures which will help to ensure that the use of scientific and technological progress is not detrimental to the environment.

6. It is widely recognized that scientific and technological progress not only opens up the possibility of influencing the natural environment in beneficial ways (for example, through cloud seeding, preventing hailstorms, dispersing mists and neutralizing the destructive force of hurricanes and typhoons), but also facilitates the military use of environmental modification techniques.

7. The concerns of the international community in this regard were reflected in the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

8. In accordance with the basic provisions contained in this legal instrument, each State party undertakes not to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury to any other State party.

9. The progress achieved in biotechnology has been accompanied by concerns as to the possible risks and deliberate abuse of this discipline. One of the principal effects of biotechnology has been seen in applied basic biological research. Most of this knowledge has practical consequences for health care, agriculture and environmental protection.

10. The ecological risks caused by the release into the environment of organisms modified through genetic engineering, genetic manipulation and the production of human clones, and the development of biological and toxic weapons are among the concerns now being aroused by biotechnology.

11. The manufacture, storage and acquisition of biological weapons for hostile uses or use in armed conflicts has been banned by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and

Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, to which Cuba is a party. It is working strenuously in the framework of this instrument to prepare a verification protocol which will supplement and strengthen it. In this context we envisage that States parties, in compliance with their obligations under the Convention, should assign the highest priority to ensuring individual safety and environmental protection and should, accordingly, collaborate with other States parties.

12. The use of new technologies for the qualitative modernization of weapons systems could transform them into more deadly means by vastly increasing their reach and accuracy. Technological processes could also lead to the development of new weapons based on the application of principles of modern physics, such as atomic particle beam weapons.

13. The conclusions of various scientific studies on the possible effects of nuclear war, including the climate changes subsumed under the term "nuclear winter", have lent a new dimension to the analysis of the global consequences of nuclear war. The international community has paid considerable attention to environmental pollution resulting from military and civilian nuclear activities and to the effects of such pollution.

14. For that reason, the work carried out by the relevant national and international organizations makes a valuable contribution to understanding the impact that such activities have on health and the environment.

15. There are more than 500,000 land- and sea-based nuclear warheads worldwide. On the technological level, new weapons research and development has continued unabated, with the emergence of more accurate nuclear ballistic missile systems and the deployment of highly accurate nuclear armed cruise missiles.

16. The studies that have been carried out have concentrated on possible climate changes due to the injection of dust into the atmosphere as a result of nuclear explosions. According to a study carried out several years ago by the United Nations, there is now conclusive scientific proof that a large-scale nuclear war would pose the danger of environmental disintegration throughout the world.

17. The aforesaid warnings, references and examples, together with the constant demand of the international community, highlight the importance of the observance of environmental norms in the preparation and implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements and reaffirm the responsibility of States to comply with the provisions of the treaties and conventions to which they are parties.

18. Cuba, mindful of the harmful impact on the environment of the use of nuclear weapons, regrets that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to establish a special committee on nuclear disarmament at its 1999 session, as requested in General Assembly resolution 53/77 X. For its part, Cuba reiterates its request to the Commission to establish at its next session, as a matter of priority, a special committee for the purpose of initiating negotiations on a gradual programme of nuclear disarmament aimed at the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

B. Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[12 June 2000]

19. Measures to implement international disarmament and arms control agreements are taken by the Russian side in strict conformity with the requirements of the Act of the Russian Federation on Protection of the Natural Environment. The general environmental safety requirements for weapons systems and components and military hardware are governed by special standard-setting documents that were prepared and enforced by the Ministry of Defence in 1999. This year, the Ministry of Defence plans to introduce a series of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 1400 environmental management standards. A major condition for carrying out disarmament measures is that technologies involving the use (including the destruction) of weapons and military hardware must undergo a State environmental expert study.

20. In keeping with the Russian Federation's obligations under the 1972 London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, the Russian Ministry of Defence has halted the dumping into the sea of radioactive waste and military hardware.

21. With a view to ensuring the Russian Federation's compliance with its obligations under the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete

the Ozone Layer, the Russian Ministry of Defence has elaborated a number of measures to ensure the use of weapons and military hardware with non-ozone-depleting substances.

22. Questions relating to compliance with environmental norms under obligations to carry out chemical weapons disarmament are governed by the Act of the Russian Federation on the Ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Act of the Russian Federation on the Destruction of Chemical Weapons. In this regard, the State body responsible for the federal target-oriented programme "Destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles in the Russian Federation" is carrying out preparatory measures to build facilities for destroying chemical weapons in seven regions and for storing them, bearing in mind the need for environmental safety during the destruction process. In the districts where each of these facilities is situated, four or five stationary posts and six to eight mobile environmental monitoring laboratories are to be constructed, and information from the posts and laboratories will be sent directly to the regional centres of the environmental monitoring system.